

# The Bluebird

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF MISSOURI



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NOVEMBER, 1974

FROM YOUR NEW PRESIDENT'S ROOST

by Paul E. Bauer

New officers were elected at our annual Lake of the Ozarks meeting in October, and a wonderful time was had by all who attended. Jim Jackson performed a fine job as president; his footprints will be hard to fill. After his many years of service as editor, vice-president and president, Jim has agreed to continue serving on the Conservation Federation of Missouri board of directors as our representative. We are very fortunate, since Jim is well known and will be effective in presenting the conservation viewpoints of our society.

Please welcome two new regional directors who were elected by the board of directors: Dr. Keith Evans, Columbia area, and Dr. Earl McHugh, Kansas City area.

The resignations of Mrs. Josephine Isenberger of Kansas City and Mrs. Alice Jeffery of Columbia were accepted with regret. They have given many long years of faithful service as regional directors. Let me express thanks from the entire society for your many fine efforts. Our thanks, too, for the faithful work of Miss Alberta Bolinger for her service as our treasurer.

Since the society elections are past, campaign promises are unnecessary. However, I would like to share some plans, and hope you will help bring some of these ideas to reality. Directly or indirectly all of our activities will aim toward expanding our membership. If you have ideas, please send me a note. With a larger organization we can become more effective in our specific conservation efforts, and will enjoy all nature study activities to a greater degree. This thrust for an expanding membership can be directed through three areas: (a) maintain an excellent Bluebird publication; (b) provide more activities for members; (c) provide more membership identification. The details will unfold elsewhere and in later issues, but let me provide a few highlights.

Maintain Excellent Bluebird Publication. Communication is the backbone of any organization, especially a statewide society. Mrs. Rebecca Matthews is doing an outstanding job as editor. In order to ease her work she will have support from three assistant editors to help gather and prepare material. Send Rebecca any articles for the next issue of The Bluebird before 1 February to do your part in keeping The Bluebird well fed and healthy!

Provide More Activities for Members. An excellent spring meeting is scheduled for next April 19-20. Starting in January your society will offer monthly "Nature Adventures" to the Best seasonal birding and wildlife study areas throughout the

entire state. You will discover that each region of our state has unique features which we should know and enjoy--before more changes take place. With car pools these trips should be possible, even if the energy crisis becomes more severe. Details of initial trips are discussed elsewhere in this issue.

Provide More Membership Identification. David Flank has provided a painted sample for an auto decal. After a selection is made, decals will be ordered; armpatches will be reordered. A major effort will be made to inform selected science teachers and local newspapers across the state of our key activities and conservation efforts. We hope this effort will bring more young people and their interests into our society.

Does all of this sound too ambitious? Only time will tell. However, I believe your efforts combined with mine can make wonderful things happen for the EXPANDING Audubon Society of Missouri.

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#### ABOVE TIMBER LINE

by Homer R. Bolen

Out of a snow flurry it came, one small dark form, winging into view and swiftly vanishing into chilly obscurity. What was it? Above timberline in the Beartooth Mountains of Wyoming at the end of June the possibilities were quite limited. It is far too small for raven or ptarmigan, or even nutcracker, and is much too dark for water pipit. Could it be the black rosy finch?

For three years that glimpse of the snow sprite has haunted me. My intuition pleaded persuasively that it must have been a black rosy finch, since no acceptable alternative could be found. But the demands of empirical science insisted on more than one ephemeral observation before reaching a conclusion.

So, back into the Beartooth mountains went Carrie and I on the last day of July. We camped that night on high ground near Beartooth Lake. Our Volkswagen camper was already gaining altitude as morning's first light spread across the mountain valleys. Trees were thinning out and becoming gnarled and scraggly. Soon we were above timberline. Bird life was scarce, but movement ahead caught our eyes. It proved to be a small flock of tail-wagging pipits. Although interesting in their own right these birds are often common in the Mississippi flyway during migration. We were seeking the more localized rosy finches.

Then it happened. We had pulled from the highway onto a broad shoulder of gravel overlooking a gentle slope strewn with boulders. There on a rock not fifty feet away stood the pair of them. Pinkish wings and rumps established their identity as rosy finches, and the dark breasts and backs ruled out their gray-crowned and brown-capped cousins. These were, indeed, black rosy finches!

We have come a thousand miles to visit them and they are at home. One of their youngsters stands nearby with quivering wings hoping for breakfast. The plea is answered with insects gathered from the alpine meadow. On the sunlit hillside across a meltwater rill fed by a thawing snowbank, a yellowbelly marmot prowls about. A pika, his mouth filled with a sheaf of grass blades, scurries among the rocks. While the sun shines he makes hay for the winter to come. Carrie and Homer, binoculars in hand, sit in their VW observatory with the matchless panorama of the Beartooth plateau spread before them. Mission is accomplished. All's right with the world.

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## ANNUAL MEETING - 1974

An organization's success is sometimes measured by the continuity of its events, but the same criteria may be used to measure stagnation. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Audubon Society of Missouri has just concluded its twenty-first consecutive annual meeting. With one or two exceptions they have been held at an organized camp area at the Lake of the Ozarks State Park.

The first meeting was held at Camp Clover Point on October 10 and 11 of 1953. Beginning in 1956 we moved to Camp Rising Sun, our present campsite. The meeting has always proved very satisfactory to those who have attended, and there are some who have attended nearly, if not all of the meetings.

This year about 80 members gathered on the extended weekend of October 4, 5 and 6. The dates for meeting were advanced one week in hopes of taking better advantage of the fall migration. Fortunately, early fall colors provided us with an exciting background for our activities.

For what I believe is the 18th consecutive year, National Guard cooks from the Jefferson City area provided us with food in quantity and quality that is seldom experienced in commercial establishments. Their friendliness and competence added much to the success of the weekend.

The feature of the Saturday evening program was a slide presentation entitled, "An East-African Safari," by Walter Lidell. His comments, with occasional help from wife, Vivian, were excellent. Walter has fabricated his own photographic system which enables him to produce very sharp copy at a substantial enlargement factor. A rather small bird nearly filled a 35mm frame. The exotic and unusual species stirred wistful thoughts that perhaps, someday, we . . .

The field trips were well attended and many of the state's better birders were on hand to close in on any bird who thought he could escape identification by assuming a nondescript fall plumage or by trying to conceal himself in the undergrowth. Lisle and Alice Jeffrey once again were the prime movers in putting it all together, and Lisle doubled as the leader of the botany group.

Bird finding was, and is, a large part of the outing. Although it seemed to us in the field that birds were not as plentiful as in the past, when 80 pairs of sharp eyes are at work, a good list will naturally result. Final tabulation shows that 85 species were listed, so each person at the meeting can claim one bird with a few left over which we will credit to the cooks.

Water birds were somewhat lagging but migratory land birds seemed more plentiful. Summer tanagers and yellow-billed cuckoos were actually common, with one or two black-billed cuckoos. Some of the better finds were late chimney swifts, a calling whip-poor-will, both marsh wrens, four species of vireos, and ten kinds of warblers. Red-headed woodpeckers were abundant at the camp ground. This occurs about every other year, and probably coincides with a good acorn crop.

We believe the Society's Annual Meeting is an event that must be continued. Perhaps the dwindling attendance, from more than 200 in the late 1950's, should prompt us to review the format. Those who attend regularly are obviously satisfied with the current arrangement, but perhaps an endeavor to develop a different type meeting would attract a larger percentage of our membership. The new officers, Paul Bauer, president, William Goodge, vice-president, Edna Kriege, secretary, and Katherine Wade, treasurer, will no doubt be thinking about this.

--reported by Jim Comfort

## MISSOURI AUDUBON NATURE ADVENTURES

by Paul Bauer

The initial efforts to get the planning for these adventures functioning may require revisions until everything works smoothly. After a few months we hope to find someone willing to take over the task of selecting trips, leaders and handling of the planning details.

**JANUARY** - Winter gulls and Rare Waterfowl - Saturday, 18 January, 1975.  
 - Leader: Richard Anderson, 1147 Grenshaw Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63137  
 - Location: Mississippi River Near Alton Dam (North of St. Louis).

In past years excellent and unusual birds have been seen when the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and Lake Michigan are frozen solid. The water for a number of miles below Alton Dam is often the most northern open water, and birds are concentrated. Gulls have included great black-backed, glaucous, black-legged kittiwake, Iceland, herring, ring-billed, and sometimes early Bonaparte's. Probably no one area in Missouri has provided more types of gulls in January.

The weather at this time of year can alter even the best laid plans, so if you want to attend, please send the leader a card with your address and phone number. Send the card before December 28, and indicate: (a) that you need a ride, or can take riders; (b) interested in a warm-up meal together after the birding; (c) need lodging details. Instructions and details will be sent to those sending a card.

**FEBRUARY** - Bald Eagle Counts and Northern Finches - Saturday, 15 February, 1975  
 - Coordinator: Paul Bauer, 4 Club Grounds South Drive, Florissant, 63033  
 - Locations - Several choices: NW, Central or NE Missouri. At least four eagle counts are taken in the state. Some are part of a U.S. government survey to determine the winter eagle population. Once I was fortunate to see twenty-three eagles at one time in the narrow field of a spotting scope. This type of specialized count can be enjoyable, and it does help to provide useful data on population trends.

Two choices exist: (a) You can help support a survey that may see only a few eagles, but will help to greatly increase the survey value; or (b) be part of a survey almost guaranteed to show you many eagles. The selection is yours, but either trip will be rewarding.

Send a card to the trip coordinator before 25 January, 1975, with your address and phone number. Indicate your choice of trip, if you need a ride, or can take riders. You will be kept informed of details.

**MARCH** - Several plans--none are firm - Saturday, 22 March, 1975.  
 - Coordinator: Paul Bauer, 4 Club Grounds South Drive, Florissant, 63033  
 Planning for several trips is being arranged. Consider the ideas below and send the coordinator a card indicating your preferred interest BEFORE 15 JANUARY, 1975. This will permit more details in the February issue of The Bluebird.

- A) Ruffed Grouse mating displays: Location near Columbia; limited to 15 or 20 people.
- B) Greater Prairie Chicken mating displays: Location near Eldorado Springs in SW Missouri; limited to 15 or 20 people.
- C) Tour of Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in North-central Missouri. At this time the full thrust of spring migration should provide concentrations of all types of waterfowl, including numerous white pelicans.

Send a card with your address and phone. Indicate first and second choice, if you need a ride, or will take riders. Note early date for card.

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## SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

There were twenty-seven men who counted birds on Christmas Day, 1900. Little did they realize the far reaching effects that first Christmas Bird Count would have.

You might say that it all began as a protest--a protest against a practice of the day in which hunters would meet on Christmas afternoon, choose up sides and then "hie them to the fields and woods to kill practically everything in fur or feathers --if they could."

It was a modest beginning; reports came from twenty-five areas of the birds seen on leisurely afternoon walks. Since that time the growth has been phenomenal. Last year over 24,800 participants took part at 1,044 different count locations, with a total of 78 million individual birds recorded. Yes, people like to search for birds, even in the winter! The count has been called the world's most popular, intensive, and perhaps longest running cooperative, semi-scientific field work project.

It is time now to think about this year's Christmas census in Missouri. Jim Comfort is our state-wide coordinator, and each compiler of a census last year will soon be contacted by him. In order to achieve greater scientific reliability from the data collected, a new policy has been set by the National Audubon Society. This makes it necessary that more details be supplied on rarer species. A state policy will be developed on this, and the local compilers will be notified.

There are still many areas of the state that are not covered, and newcomers who would take the responsibility for working in these areas would be welcomed. If you have considered the establishment of a circle near you, contact:

Jim Comfort, 27 North Iola Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63119.

This year's count period extends from Saturday, December 14 through Tuesday, December 31, 1974.

It is a demonstrated fact that more birders looking more hours in the field will find more species and, of course, a larger total number of birds. Generally for most of Missouri in late December, it has been shown that about 100 party-hours are required to see 95% of the available land species. Many of the established census areas require more support for optimum results. With hard work and good cooperation, some group in Missouri may be able to top 100 species.

Every member of our statewide society is encouraged to take part in one or more of the established bird counts. Make your plans now, invite a friend, and share in a very rewarding adventure. The location for the Missouri counts and names to contact are shown below.

## NORTHWEST

Maryville - Dr. David Esterla, 1420 North Dewey, Maryville, 64468

St. Joseph - Floyd Lawhon, 3327 Burnside Ave., St. Joseph, 64505

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge - Jack Hilsabeck, Box 62, Rosendale, 64483

## WEST

Kansas City (north) - Harry Gregory, 9505 Bennington, Kansas City, Mo. 64134

Kansas City (S.E.) - Harry Gregory, same as above

\*Trimble Waterfowl Area - Christopher Hobbs, 3307 S. Cedar, Independence, 64052

## SOUTHWEST

Newton and McDonald County - Norma Crews, Route 4, Box 310 A, Neosho, 64850

Springfield - Nathan Fay, Ozark, 65721

## NORTHEAST

Hannibal - William Dierker, 5042 Pulliam, Hannibal, 63401

## CENTRAL

- Columbia - Edward Pickett, 608 Westmount Ave., Columbia, 65201  
 Montrose Lake Wildlife Area - John Belshe, Biology Department  
 Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, 64093  
 Sullivan - Jim Irvine, 624 Jane Street, Sullivan, 63080  
 Mineola - Rae Windsor, Route 3, Montgomery City, 63361  
 Salem - David Plank, Route 2, Box 178, Salem, 65560  
 \*Jefferson City area - Sydney Wade, 2202 Missouri Blvd., Jefferson City, 65101  
 \*N.C. Lake Area - Jim Rathert, 1308 Wilson Ave., Columbia, 65201

## EAST

- Gray Summit - Donald Hays, Route 3, Box 4, Union, 63084  
 Orchard Farm - Earl Comfort, 630 West Essex Ave., Kirkwood, 63122  
 Weldon Spring - James Comfort, 27 North Iola Drive, St. Louis, 63119

## SOUTHEAST

- Big Oak Tree State Park - Jim Haw, 306 East Market, Charleston, 63834  
 Mingo Wildlife Area - Jim Haw (as above)  
 Cape Girardeau - Paul Hey, 1651 Perryville, Cape Girardeau, 63701  
 Dexter - Robert Gaede - 321 West Elk, Dexter 63841

\*Potential Counts for 1974

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SUMMER SURVEY - June 1 through July 31

by Dick Anderson

Summer weather was fairly uniform throughout the state. June was cooler than normal with thunderstorms common during the early part of the month. Seven people were killed in the St. Louis area by lightning. Flash flooding created havoc from Kansas City north through St. Joseph and Squaw Creek areas. July turned very hot with little or no rain. Crop damage was considerable because of the drought. Some rain occurred in southern Missouri in late July with Springfield receiving  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches on July 25.

Loons through Waterfowl - Unusual was a common loon in Kaiser Park near Mexico, Mo. on June 10, 11 (RW). Also late was an Eared Grebe at Squaw Creek June 1 (FL). Ten white pelicans were noted on Stockton Lake July 7 (NF). Least bitterns were very common at Squaw Creek with up to 20 sightings in a day (FL). They were also a common breeder near St. Louis in leftover flood-created marshes (EC et al). Yellow-crowned night herons outnumbered black-crowned in St. Louis, where at least 20 pair were thought to be breeding (RA). This is a complete turn-around from 15-20 years ago, when yellow-crowneds were rare and black-crowneds nested by the hundreds. Paul Heye reports five species of herons nesting in Scott County in southeast Missouri. While the nest count was down slightly, there were still over 5000 nests, and cattle egrets continue to increase. They also increased at St. Louis.

Blue-winged teals nested at Kansas City (KH) and St. Louis (RA et al). Wood duck production was up considerably at Kansas City (KH) and St. Louis (RA).

Hawks through Woodpeckers - Hawks were scarce in northwest Missouri (FL) and near Springfield (NF). Red-tails were up south of Kansas City (KH), and several Swainson's were noted west of Springfield (NF). Mississippi kites are not rare in southeast Missouri, but Paul Heye's report of two kites over a five square block wooded, residential area of Cape Girardeau is unprecedented. Six observers noted the kites over a four week's period. Two pair of red-shouldered hawks successfully bred south of St. Louis along the Mississippi River. This is the first known breeding of this species in that area for at least 15 years.

Upland sandpipers were summer residents in St. Louis County, St. Charles County, in the Kansas City area, and near St. Joseph. Because of National Audubon's change of date for the Summer Report to end on July 31, there were few migrant shorebirds

reported. One exception was a red phalarope near St. Louis on July 28. The bird was found by Mil Schaeffer on Highway 67 in St. Charles County just south of Alton Dam. It was seen later that day by Dick and Mitzi Anderson and Kathryn Arhos. The phalarope, except for the head, was still in breeding plumage and was seen in good sunlight through the 40x scope.

Floyd Lawhon reports the burrowing owls first seen May 12 had produced five young by June 15. A refuge employee claims he saw a total of nine by mid-July. Owls were generally reported as scarce, but Chris Hobbs, who was working as a railroad brakeman, saw many barred and great-horned along the tracks at night.

Nighthawks were up at least in the cities. Chuck-will's widow, normally common near Springfield, was reported down considerably. Ruby-throated hummingbirds were down at Kansas City, but up at St. Louis. Likewise there were no records of belted kingfishers at Kansas City, while there was a slight increase at St. Louis (RA).

Woodpeckers were generally stable, but down at Springfield.

Perching Birds - Western kingbirds continue to decline in St. Joseph (FL), while they were common at Kansas City (KH). There was a slight decrease in scissor-tailed flycatchers at Springfield (NF). Swallows in general had a very good year. Purple Martins and cliff swallows enjoyed their first increase at St. Louis in several years. Short-billed marsh wrens were common in the "flood" marshes at St. Louis (EC, RA et al). Two singing long-billed marsh wrens (rare in summer) were noted in St. Charles County during June and July (RA). The June storms destroyed 50% of the robin and dove nests in Kansas City, but later broods minimized the loss. Most early breeders such as robins, cardinals, etc., had completed their first nesting in St. Louis before the June storms hit.

For the Icteridae family there was good and bad news. Good news included the bobolinks nesting near St. Joseph, and yellow-headed blackbirds were very common at Squaw Creek (FL). Baltimore Orioles were actually abundant in some areas near St. Louis (RA). The bad news is that common grackles and cowbirds are doing too well.

Summer finches were about normal, except for a "population explosion" of rose-breasted grosbeaks in the Kansas City area (KH).

RA - Richard Anderson

EC - Earl Comfort

NF - Nathan Fay

FL - Floyd Lawhon

RW - Ray Windsor

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#### COLORFUL MIGRATION

If you see a bird this fall dressed in rainbow colors, you can believe your eyes. Two separate migration studies are being conducted in which the feathers of certain ducks and eagles have been dyed pink, yellow or blue. The research will be successful only if observations away from the marking locations are reported.

David Trauger, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is heading a study of migration habits and wintering distribution of canvasbacks. If you see one of these in blue, yellow or pink, you are asked to report. Please send the name and address of the observer, the date, time and location of the sighting and the color of the marking. Other information about the flock would be helpful.

This information on canvasbacks should be sent to the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, P. O. Box 1747, Jamestown, North Dakota 58401

In another part of the country a study is being made in West Texas by Graduate Student Mike Lockhart with the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Alpine, Texas. This project seeks to determine the origin of golden eagles which winter in west Texas. These birds are being trapped and color marked in light blue on wings and tail. If you observe one of these birds please report the sighting date, and its exact location with your name and address.

Information on color-marked golden eagles should be sent to the Division of Wildlife Service, Federal Building--Room 1748, 601 E. 12th St., Kansas City, 64106.

## CONSERVATION TOPICS

Reported by James P. Jackson, Conservation Editor

THE WELDON SPRING PLAN. The University of Missouri, after World War II, acquired 8,000 acres of federal surplus property with the stipulation that it be used for educational purposes for 20 years. The stipulation was fulfilled by having part of the area used for agricultural research. Most of it, though, including wooded hills, fields, bluffs and Missouri River bottomland, has remained but little disturbed since before World War II.

Now the University Board of Curators, seeking a way to make money from the area for an endowment fund, is considering the possibility of selling the tract. Developers would no doubt offer the best price, but the thought of this does not please most Missourians, so the University is having feasibility studies conducted.

The best alternative right now is a cooperative plan offered by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Department of Conservation, and the St. Louis Zoo. It would keep the entire area in public ownership by having some 3,000 acres developed as a state park recreation area, another 4,000 acres to be maintained as a wildlife refuge, and the rest to be used as a satellite breeding area for rare species by the St. Louis Zoo.

There is a great need for recreational and wildlife areas near large metropolitan centers; the University tract is only about 25 miles from St. Louis and adjoins the August A. Busch Wildlife Area. Seldom does such a large tract of land offer the unique opportunities as this one does so close to a large city. The cooperative plan now being offered deserves wide support. The 8,000 acres should not be sold to private developers who would no doubt--because of its location--use it to build sprawling subdivisions; that we do not need.

Champion Tree Saved. Those who attended our 1974 Annual Meeting at Camp Rising Sun may recall having signed a petition to save our state champion chinkapin oak from destruction due to highway construction. The effort to save this tree has drawn attention from all over the state and has become a victory. The State Highway Department has cancelled plans to build a bridge over a nearby creek which would have required cutting down the champion. Hopefully, the Highway Department will find a better site for the bridge.

Meramec Dam Has New Critics. Of all the many arguments against building a Corp of Engineers dam on lovely Meramec River, one that has received most attention lately has to do with bats. It seems that the Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Department of Interior, is strongly opposing the dam because it bodes to threaten an endangered species, the Indiana bat. This argument, plus others, are sure to be heard when the Sierra Club lawsuit against the Corps has its hearing in court. This case has been delayed a number of times, but the date is now, hopefully, to be November 25. In view of the ever increasing opposition to this project, we would not mind the delays except for the fact that the Corps of Engineers is busy with roadbuilding and other damsite preparations.

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How Our Wild Birds Were Named (continued from page 9)

I have no intention of doing so.

The names I've mentioned have been those found in our check lists and bird books, not those I grew up with such as butcher bird, Jenny wren, buzzard, mud hen, brown thrush, turtle dove and raincrow. By no stretch of the imagination are some of the birds' names appropriate. Others are quite adequate. In any event, they are colorful and add to the birdwatcher's delight.

## HOW OUR WILD BIRDS WERE NAMED

by Earl Comfort

Although I thoroughly enjoy birding, I get almost as big a kick out of bird names, their namers and the derivations of their names. It is quite certain the namers had the birds in hand in those olden days. How else can we account for such choices as downy and hairy woodpecker, roughwinged swallow or sharp-shinned hawk? Of course we all prefer our two birds in the bush, now that they have been named.

Most birds were named for their colors, shape, size, nesting locations, habitat, food preference, season, song or call notes, habits, for a person, from association, and last, but far from least, for a part of the bird body.

Would you believe more than thirty body parts figured in their naming? For most of these we can find examples among our Missouri birds. Heading the list should be the red-headed woodpecker, or perhaps, the common redpoll. The crown may be tufted, crested or capped, as in tufted titmouse, great-crested flycatcher, or black-capped chickadee. There is a golden-crowned sparrow, which is not a kingbird. There is a raft of birds named for the size, color or shape of the bill, as yellow-billed or black-billed cuckoo. And, of course, we have long and short-billed marsh wrens for the long and the short of it.

There are long and short-eared owls and horned owls. The owls won't give a hoot, but the horns and ears are not what they seem to be, but as we all know, tufts of feathers. There is a monkey-faced (barn) owl, red-faced warbler, red-napped sapsucker (old name), a golden-cheeked warbler, a red-necked grebe, ruffed grouse and ruby-throated hummingbird.

Leaving the head and moving to the body we find broad-winged hawks and red-winged blackbirds. I have personally renamed the male scarlet tanager the black-winged redbird, but the AOU hasn't accepted that name yet.

There is the red-breasted nuthatch, rufous-sided towhee, black-bellied plover, and the not-so-red red-bellied woodpecker. There is a red-shouldered hawk, black-backed gull, ladder-backed woodpecker, white-rumped sandpiper, bristled-thighed curlew, rough-legged or sharp-shinned hawks. Tails are included in names like red-tailed and short-tailed hawks and scissor-tailed flycatchers.

A look at feet determined such names as Lapland longspur, three-toed woodpecker, and blue-footed booby. Since I have never met a booby, I can't judge its intelligence, and you must judge the IQ of the cuckoos and loons.

Most of our American swallows were named for their nesting habitats--the barn, tree, bank, cliff and cave. Named for their habitat are marsh wren and marsh hawk, meadowlark and field sparrow. Territorial names are eastern and western bluebirds. Chimney swifts were double-named for speed and habitat. The cardinal was named for its color, not for its religious status. The phoebe was named for its song, the chickadee for its call notes. Kingfishers and kingbirds got their names from their self-proclaimed right to the title through their bullying tactics. The cattle egret and cowbird were named through their association with bovines; house wrens and house sparrows because they took to human dwellings.

Size figured in the naming of the elf owl, pygmy nuthatch and least tern. Lesser, great and greater were often used. Feeding habits figured often. There are acorn woodpeckers, gnatcatchers, and flycatchers. The seasons gave us winter wrens and summer tanagers. Habits named roadrunner, nuthatches, nutcrackers, thrashers, creepers and dippers. An example of a bird named for a person is Missouri's own Harris sparrow.

Actually, I have only scraped the surface and could go on and on. Don't panic.  
(Continued on page 8)

"THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF MISSOURI" DECALS

Colorful decals with a picture of a bluebird and our Society's name will be available soon. Why should you put the Society decal on your automobile? It helps to promote the Audubon Society of Missouri. When you are on local field trips with your friends the decal will be noticed. Let them know the new things our organization is doing. Invite them to join; invite them to the next "Nature Adventure." (See Page 4.) Decals on cars make it easier for people to stay together on field trips when many cars are involved, in spite of numerous stops, ferry crossings or intervening traffic.

Since this is the first offering of a decal for our Society, we would like for each member to have one free. The following guide lines were approved by the board of directors at the Fall Meeting.

One Free Decal for New Members. People joining as regular members for the first time.

One Free Decal for the Recruiter of a New Member. The new member should mention the name of his recruiter member on the membership application form.

One Free Decal to a Member Paying Three Years' Dues at one time. If you have just paid your annual dues, send a check (and a reminder note) to the treasurer for two more years of dues to receive your decal. Your simple action saves the society postage and mailing costs, and helps to earn more interest for conservation purposes. This savings to us is thus passed along to you.

Additional decals may be purchased from the treasurer when they become available after the first of the year. (PEB)

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## REPORT ON BLUEBIRD NESTING BOX STUDY

by Burrell and Ruby Pickering

For the seventh consecutive year, the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, as one of its Nature Study Projects, has conducted a sixteen-weekend Bluebird Nesting Box Survey at Sunny Ranch in Warren County, Missouri. Each of 60 boxes was checked weekly. Detailed information was recorded for each box as to occupancy--kind of bird, number of eggs, number fledged, the behavior pattern of the bluebirds, as well as any unusual observations. A total of 85 people cooperated in the project.

Nesting was well underway when the first check was made on April 20. However, the final results were down somewhat from 1973--probably because of a seven weeks' drought.

An unusual loss of eggs, 55 as compared with 25 last year, defied explanation. A two foot band of metal around each post kept animals out. In the later part of the season, all posts were greased to prevent snakes from entering the nests, but still there were some egg losses.

Dr. Burt L. Monroe, Jr., chairman of the Department of Biology of the University of Louisville, an expert on bluebirds, was called on for help. He could offer no explanation for the disappearing eggs other than the "two-legged variety of 'predator', particularly the young and mischievous kind." However, there was no reason to suspect vandalism, so the disappearance of eggs remains a mystery.

The following interesting observations were made:

NEST BUILDING usually required five or six days, but during the height of the breeding season, one weekend the box would be empty, the following weekend it would have a nest and several eggs in it. Both male and female helped in nest building, but it was usually the female who did most of the work. The nests were loose, poorly built structures, however in the snug cavity of the boxes, expert workmanship is not required. The nests were almost entirely of dried grasses and weed stems with the lining of fine grasses.

EGG LAYING started soon after the nest was completed and usually there were four or five pale blue, ovate eggs.

INCUBATION started as soon as the last egg was laid and required about 14 days. Several times observers mentioned that during incubation the female refused to leave the nest when the box was opened.

YOUNGS grew rapidly and were full feathered and were ready to leave the nest in 15 to 18 days. They were able to fly a short distance to some branch on the first try, and none were found on the ground.

FEEDING was done by both parents, bringing a diet almost exclusively of insects every few minutes from dawn to dusk. Youngs are still fed after leaving the nest by the male while the female continues with her next brood.

HOUSEKEEPING was excellent. Shells were carried some distance away as soon as the young are hatched. Likewise droppings of the young are quickly removed.

IN ITS FOOD HABITS the bluebird is one of the most useful birds. It does little harm to human interest, feeding almost entirely on insects, thereby destroying large quantities of those which are harmful. The vegetable portion of their diet is largely fleshy fruit, mostly wild.

That the boxes can be opened and inspected without unduly disturbing the bluebirds is one of the big surprises to those who do not know their friendliness and patience. Usually, when a box is approached, the adult bird, if present, would leave and wait quietly on a nearby limb until the observers left. Inspection was done as quickly and carefully as possible.

We have been asked why the need for bluebird nesting boxes. This can be explained by the fact that bluebirds nest only in cavities, either natural or man made. Formerly the sites used consisted of old woodpecker holes and other natural cavities in dead trees or wooden fence posts. Under today's farming practices, dead trees are usually removed, and fence posts are of metal. Adequate natural nesting sites have declined and with them the bluebird population.

Put up boxes for the friendly bluebirds if you can. You will enjoy having them all year, marvel that they carry the deep blue sky on their backs, and agree that they have been rightly chosen as the official bird of the State of Missouri.

#### RESULTS OF 1974 BLUEBIRD NESTING BOX STUDY AT SUNNY RANCH

EGGS: Total laid	386	YOUNGS: Died in Nest	13
Infertile or deserted	22	Lost to Predators	18
Disappeared from Nest	55	Fledged	278
Youngs hatched	307	Percentage Eggs Laid	72%
Percentage	80%	Percentage of hatched	90%

<u>Bluebird Yearly Comparison Data</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>
Boxes Available	40	58	60	60	60
Boxes in which Nested	28	36	50	45	42
Total Nests	46	55	87	89	83
Eggs laid	212	248	393	387	386
Eggs per Nest	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.6
Youngs Fledged	137	195	199	289	278*
Percentage of success	65%	79%	76%	75%	72%
Average per nest	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.3

\* Plus 5 Chickadees fledged

...♂...♂...♂...

# ♪♪ NOTES AND FEATHERS

that fall on the editor's desk

## A. DEAN COLE MEMORIAL ESTABLISHED

The Nature Conservancy has recently purchased a thirteen acre plot joining their Lichen Glade area in St. Clair County. This beautiful and interesting spot has been chosen as a memorial to the late A. Dean Cole. The addition includes a picturesque sandstone bluff, topped by the balance and best portion of Lichen Glade, a heavily timbered flood plain lying between the bluff and Salt Creek, and some of the creek itself.

Dean Cole was an enthusiastic birder and active member of The Audubon Society of Missouri, the Burrough's Club of Kansas City, and other nature oriented organizations. Mrs. Cole is one of the directors of our Society.

The memorial fund established by our Society has recently been transferred to The Nature Conservancy and will be used to apply on the cost of this property. Additional memorial gifts for this purpose would be appreciated and may be sent to Joel Massie, 1015 Locust St., St. Louis, Mo. 63101. Mark your tax deductible gifts: "A. Dean Cole Memorial Fund."

## CONGRATULATIONS!

The October, 1974, issue of the Smithsonian contains an article, "Rare Glimpses of Newborn Bats," written by Patricia Esterla with exciting photographs by David. This article tells the story of the capture of pregnant spotted and western mastiff bats, the birth of their young, and the subsequent behavior of the mother and babies. Both of these species are very rare in the United States and were captured in Big Bend National Park where Dave is a summertime naturalist. Patty ably describes the excitement and fascination that occurred during this history making event. This was the first recorded birth of these bats in captivity and the first pictures ever of newborn bats of these species.

Get a copy and read this fine article. (PG) (JFC)

## A NORTHERN VISITOR IN WINTER WHITE

A flash of white caught my eye as a flock of juncos flew across the road. It was more than the usual white of tail feathers. An albino? The birds settled in a large tree as I parked my car and reached for binoculars. That one bird was different was obvious even at that distance. I could very easily see his gleaming breast. "It's not an albino!" I thought; he had too much color for that. As I watched, the birds flew back across the road and into the weed patch where they had been feeding as I drove up. I caught another glimpse of white as I pursued them along the road and into a small lane. As I waited I said, almost to myself, "I wish...." And then out loud, "I wish-sh-sh, wish-sh-sh, wish-sh-sh!" My plea was heard.

The juncos responded and flew into some small trees. And then the little white bird took his place on a low limb, not twenty feet away from me. He sat very quietly, carefully observing the wish-maker.

He was beautiful! Unmistakably a snow bunting. There was black and some brown in his back and wings and tail, but his breast was pure white except for a small soft brownish mark behind his throat. His face had some brown, but there was a tiny eye-ring, the whitest I have ever seen--almost whiter than the rest of him. We watched one another until he became bored and disappeared.

What was a snow bunting doing in Springfield on November 2? Who could even guess? My friends and I have scrutinized almost every flock of juncos in Greene County to no avail. Maybe if we wish hard enough: "Wish-sh-sh, wish-sh-sh..." (RM)

## ARTIST'S WORK A DELIGHT.

A delightful bonus for those who attended the Fall Meeting at Camp Rising Sun was the opportunity to see the beautiful originals and prints of Artist David Plank. It was a pleasure, too, to visit with the artist whose easy smile and casual appearance gave no clue to the talent which has brought him acclaim far beyond the borders of his native Missouri. In December, 1973, he was honored by being elected to membership in the Society of Animal Artists in New York City.

The interesting bird drawings which have appeared regularly in recent issues of The Bluebird are David's work. We do appreciate his sharing his art work with us.

Anyone interested in the limited edition prints of twenty of the best loved birds of Mid-America may contact Natural Heritage Prints, 3000 Rollins Road, Columbia, Mo. 65201. Originals may be purchased from Jim's Paint Pallet in Columbia. Requests for further information concerning prints or originals may be directed to the artist at Route 2, Box 178, Salem, Missouri, 65560.

## A GREAT LOSS

The name of Allan D. Cruickshank has long been closely associated with birding and nature. His death in October following a short illness brings a feeling of sorrow and loss. He was 67 years old and lived at Rockledge, Florida. He was lecturer, photographer, writer, and above all a teacher, with a colorful sense of humor. For thirty-seven years he served on the staff of the National Audubon Society. His contagious enthusiasm for birding, his competitive zest, his boundless energy have all been reflected in the mammoth growth of the annual Christmas Bird Count for which he served as editor for seventeen years.

Our sympathy is extended to his wife, Helen, who shared in the joy of his work.

## WANTA BUY A DUCK--STAMP?

Nathaniel P. Reed, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, has urged all conservationist to participate in the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Program and help purchase wetland habitat for migratory waterfowl. Established in 1934, the program requires all hunters to buy "duck stamps" from their local post offices at \$5.00 each. Over two million acres of wetlands have been purchased from duck stamp revenues. The 1974 program is now being expanded so that everyone will be able to buy the stamps and help safeguard North American waterfowl. The stamp is one and one-half by one inches and depicts a wood duck in flight.

## THANKS TO ALL.

The Bluebird is a joint effort and many people are involved in getting it to you. Articles must be written, Mimeographing, folding, addressing, and mailing all take time. Our thanks to many who contribute in various ways.

If you have articles or notes of interest for our readers please send them to the editor (address on back page by February first for the next issue. Thanks. (RM)

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## NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF YOUR REGIONAL DIRECTORS - OLD AND NEW:

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105 Terry Lane,  
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